

Cooks River Alliance

Action Plan 2014-2017



 **CooksRiver**
ALLIANCE

Ashfield
Bankstown
Canterbury
City of Sydney
Hurstville
Marrickville
Rockdale
Strathfield



photo by Chris Hudson
bush regeneration cover photo (top right) by Jakki Trenbath
pelican cover photo (bottom left) by Ranjith Evas
community raingarden construction cover photo (middle left)
River Health monitoring cover photo (top left)

Alliance Action Plan 2014-2017

Introduction

The Cooks River Alliance Action Plan 2014-2017 was developed collaboratively by the eight founding councils of the Cooks River Alliance – Ashfield Council, Bankstown City Council, City of Canterbury, City of Sydney, Hurstville City Council, Marrickville Council, Rockdale City Council, and Strathfield Council.

The Action Plan 2014-2017 is a companion document to the Cooks River Alliance Management Plan 2014, which provides important context and strategic direction.

Development of this plan

This Plan arises from the strong basis of the first Action Plan finalised in 2012, and builds upon the work of the former Cooks River Foreshores Working Group and the Cooks River Sustainability Initiative.

Programs

The seven Programs of the Action Plan are:

1. Capacity Building
2. Catchment Monitoring
3. Information & Website
4. On-ground Works
5. Collaboration & Community Engagement
6. Communications
7. Catchment Resilience

The Action Plan tables detail objectives, performance measures, resources and responsibilities for each Program.

Implementation of this Plan

The Action Plan provides implementation directions for the seven Programs.

The Alliance Board provides oversight of Action Plan implementation. Alliance Staff and Steering Committee drive the plan with support from member councils. The Alliance also works closely with other stakeholders including local communities, Aboriginal advisory committees, state agencies and authorities, and the private sector – all play significant roles in realisation of this Action Plan.

Reporting and review of this Plan

Each year, an annual report is presented to the Alliance Board, documenting progress. The Action Plan will be reviewed as required, as well as in 2017-2018.

Relationship to other plans

Alliance Management Plan 2014-2017

The Alliance Action Plan supports the high level strategic directions of the Alliance Management Plan 2014, by detailing seven Programs. Below is a summary of the Alliance mission, focus areas, long term outcomes, and approaches, as outlined in the Management Plan 2014.

The **mission** of the Cooks River Alliance is:
Councils working together with communities for a healthy Cooks River catchment.

The mission will be achieved under six **focus areas**:

- Sustainable urban water management
- Biodiversity
- Community action
- Capacity building
- Catchment information
- Catchment resilience

The Alliance works towards the realisation of the following **long term outcomes**:

- The quality and volumes of water flowing to the Cooks River from all parts of the catchment better reflect the natural water cycle
- Natural habitats are thriving and connected across the catchment
- Communities actively participate to improve the health of the catchment
- The Alliance councils have a high capacity for, and are known for, their leadership in sustainable urban water and catchment management
- Accessible, centralised and up-to-date information about the catchment is readily available
- The catchment's resilience to pressures from changing environments has increased

The Alliance has adopted following the **approaches**:

- Place-based solutions
- Education and training
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Creative resourcing
- Evidence-based decision making

Planning & policy context

The Cooks River, its tributaries and catchment (collectively referred to here as the Cooks River catchment) are subject to a myriad of state, regional and local environmental planning management instruments, legislation, policies and plans.

State Policy

The Alliance Action Plan contributes to achieving a central strategy of *NSW 2021: A Plan to make NSW number One* – ‘strengthen our local environment and communities.’ The Action plan aligns with a number of the goals under this strategy, particularly:

- Protect our natural environment
- Increase opportunities for people to look after their own neighbourhoods and environments
- Make it easier for people to be involved in their communities
- Fostering opportunity and partnership with Aboriginal people

The Alliance will work with local and regional agencies on strategic planning of relevance to the Cooks River catchment.

Regional Environmental Policy

The Alliance Action Plan contributes to achieving the stormwater pollutant reduction targets set out in the Botany Bay Catchment and Water Quality Improvement Plan 2011.

Local plans & strategies

The Alliance Action Plan considers and complements:

- Community Strategic Plans of member councils
- Environmental management strategies and initiatives developed by councils and other stakeholders for the Cooks River catchment.

Staffing

In 2014 Alliance staff comprise: a Project Manager, an Environmental Engineer, a Community Engagement & Education Coordinator, and a part-time Communications Support Officer.

Member supported staffing for 2014-2017 is envisaged to be a full time Project Manager and Environmental Engineer, a four days per week Community Engagement & Education Coordinator and a three days per week Communications Support Officer. Funding from the Australian Government over 2014-2017 also provides for a full time Participation Coordinator.

Core Alliance Staff Administrative Functions

Alliance administrative work is undertaken to enable delivery of the Programs.

Administrative functions include:

- Review of the Management Plan, Action Plan, Terms of Reference and production of Annual Reports
- Coordination of meetings and provision of administrative support for the Alliance Board, Executive and Steering Committee, Action Groups and others as required
- Management and reporting on Alliance finances and budgets
- Seeking funding opportunities, writing and submitting funding applications, applying for awards
- Reporting on grant progress and undertaking acquittals
- General communications, public relations and correspondence
- Office management, staff recruitment, management and professional development

Financial Resources

The Alliance is funded through contributions from member councils, and by grants from other spheres of government. Sponsorship may also be accepted.

This Action Plan 2014-2017 has been developed considering annual contributions from the eight founding councils. Fees for councils are calculated using a formula which was agreed during the formation of the Alliance, and draws upon the percentage of the total catchment each member council has, as well as the proportion of each local government area which is Cooks River catchment. Contributions for the period have been based on the 2013-2014 figure established in the initial Action Plan, with a CPI increase each year.

In 2013 the Alliance devoted considerable time and resources to secure significant funding from the Australian Government, and successfully received a \$2 million grant for the Cooks River Place.People.Connections Project. Grant activities are captured across the Action Plan tables.

Projected Budget 2014-17

The projected budget below shows anticipated income and expenditure of member funds at the time of writing, and will be subject to adjustment over the period. The budget does not include grant income and expenditure.

INCOME FROM MEMBERS	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Ashfield	\$7,161	\$7,326	\$7,494
Bankstown	\$37,851	\$38,722	\$39,612
Canterbury	\$89,001	\$91,048	\$93,142
City of Sydney	\$52,173	\$53,373	\$54,601
Hurstville	\$47,058	\$48,140	\$49,248
Marrickville	\$66,495	\$68,024	\$69,589
Rockdale	\$75,702	\$77,443	\$79,224
Strathfield	\$49,104	\$50,233	\$51,389
Rollover from previous year	\$292,004	\$154,566	\$74,659
Total annual income	\$716,549	\$588,875	\$518,958

CORE FUNDS EXPENDITURE	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Salaries	\$301,135	\$305,376	\$315,301
On-costs	\$105,849	\$107,340	\$110,828
Programs	\$150,000	\$96,500	\$100,000
Operating & contingency	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Total Annual Expenditure	\$561,984	\$514,216	\$531,129
Balance	\$154,566	\$74,659	-\$12,171
Reserve funds			\$72,958

Program 1: Capacity Building

Purpose This program increases Alliance members' skills and knowledge, including with Aboriginal advisory committees, for action on catchment health and sustainable urban water management. The program aligns with *all the Alliance focus areas*, and will be achieved through the Alliance approach of *education and training*.

Action Group Ashfield Council, City of Canterbury, City of Sydney, Hurstville City Council, and Marrickville Council

Objective	Actions	Performance Measures	Time Frames	Grant/ other Resources	Alliance Resources	Responsibility
1.1 To determine, develop and deliver capacity building opportunities for member councils	1.1.1 Develop and deliver a capacity building survey to member councils	Capacity building survey Council participants	2014 & 2016		✓	All Alliance staff
	1.1.2 Assess capacity building survey results, and develop and deliver a training schedule	Capacity building activities Council & staff participants Participant survey feedback	2014-2017	✓	✓	
	1.1.3 Support technical groups and professional forums	Report as required	2014-2017	✓		
	1.1.4 Encourage/support members to participate in leadership programs	Report as required		✓		
	1.1.5 Organise workshops, guest speakers or tours, including for senior executive staff	Two events	2014-2017	✓		
	1.1.6 Increase affiliation with CRC for Water Sensitive Cities	Report as required	2014-2017	✓		
1.2 To increase members' capacity to design and construct better Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) systems	1.2.1 Confirm a research and delivery partner	Partnership agreement	2014-2016	✓		Environmental Engineer
	1.2.2 With delivery partner, develop, implement and assess a raingarden performance monitoring program	Raingardens monitored Final report	2014-2016 2016-2017	✓		
	1.2.3 Communicate program findings to increase council Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) capacity	One workshop	2016-2017	✓		
1.3 To enhance member council Aboriginal advisory committee capacity for participation in catchment management processes	1.3.1 Work with Aboriginal advisory committees to ascertain and deliver appropriate ways to increase capacity for improving catchment health	Three committees engaged Report annually	2014-2017	✓		Community Engagement and Education Coordinator & Participation Coordinator
	1.3.2 Engage expert consultants to work closely with committees to identify and deliver increased knowledge and skills	Consultants commissioned	2015-2017	✓		
	1.3.3 Closely link advisory committee capacity building with on-ground works	Number of events	2015-2017	✓		
	1.3.4 Seek partnerships with Aboriginal groups	Number of Aboriginal groups	2014-2017	✓		

Program 2: Catchment Monitoring

Purpose This program reports, interprets and communicates changes in catchment health, and provides recommendations to member councils. Monitoring sources include catchment agencies and community groups. The program aligns with the Alliance focus areas of *sustainable urban water management*, *community action*, and *catchment information*, and will be achieved through the Alliance approaches of *education and training*, *collaboration*, *communication*, and *creative resourcing*.

Action Group Bankstown City Council, Marrickville Council, and Rockdale City Council

Objective	Actions	Performance Measures	Time Frames	Grant/ other Resources	Alliance Resources	Responsibility
2.1 To monitor, evaluate and benchmark the health of the Cooks River catchment - including water quality, biodiversity and riparian vegetation	2.1.1 Conduct the River Health monitoring program in partnership with GRCCC	Report annually	2014-2015		✓	Project Manager, & Environmental Engineer & Community Engagement and Education Coordinator & Communications Support Officer
	2.1.2 Consider recommendations from the independent review of the River Health and River Science programs and determine program revisions with GRCCC	Agreed revisions	2014-2015		✓	
	2.1.3 Run revised River Health program	Report annually	2015-2017		✓	
	2.1.4 Advocate for prioritised River Health recommendations, including at catchment stakeholders meetings	Advocate as required	2014-2017		✓	
	2.1.5 Work with Sydney Water to increase understanding of catchment health	Report as required	2014-2017		✓	
	2.1.6 Utilise Streamwatch data	Report and advocate as required	2014-2017		✓	
2.2 To increase understanding and knowledge about catchment monitoring and river health	2.2.1 Work with community organisations, schools, and the Australian Museum to grow participation in community based monitoring programs	Number of community sampling days	2014-2017	✓	✓	Community Engagement and Education Coordinator
	2.2.2 Deliver catchment monitoring reporting, including consideration of Sydney Water and Streamwatch data	Report annually	2014-2017	✓	✓	Community Engagement and Education Coordinator & Communications Support Officer

Program 3: Information & Website

Purpose This program informs councils and communities about the catchment, with a focus on information that supports Alliance activities. The program aligns with the Alliance focus areas of *catchment information* and *community action*, and will be achieved through the Alliance approaches of *education and training*, *communication*, *creative resourcing*, *collaboration* and *evidence-based decision making*.

Action Group City of Sydney, Hurstville City Council, and Strathfield Council

Objective	Actions	Performance Measures	Time Frames	Grant/ other Resources	Alliance Resources	Responsibility
3.1 To develop a framework for catchment information	3.1.1 Define and establish a framework for catchment information					
	Identifies: what information will be targeted, where it is located, how it will be targeted (e.g. collected, aggregated, digitised, and/or interpreted), when it will be prioritised, and who will be responsible (e.g. member councils, Alliance staff, or Alliance website users)					Member councils & Project Manager & Communications Support Officer
3.2 To publish and present catchment information engagingly	Targeted information supports Alliance activities, and may include:	Framework for catchment information completed	2015-2017		✓	
	- Existing Alliance-held publications and CooksNet content					
	- WUSD projects in the catchment					
	- Material identified through a joint members' libraries initiative					
3.2 To publish and present catchment information engagingly	- Regionally significant information					
	- Digital education tools					
	- Information and data relevant to the catchment from various relevant websites and sources					
	- Alliance activities					
3.2 To publish and present catchment information engagingly	3.2.1 Scope and commission a new website in order to publish and present information engagingly	New website launched	2015		✓	Project Manager & Communications Support Officer
	3.2.2 Manage and update current and new website	Website analytics	2014-2017		✓	
	3.2.3 Present information through additional modes, such as a mobile App	Report as required	2015-2017		✓	

Program 4: On-ground Works

Purpose This program undertakes on-ground works to reduce the quantity of, and improve the quality of, stormwater entering the Cooks River. These works will also enhance habitats and ecosystems within the Cooks River catchment. The program aligns with *all the Alliance focus areas*, and will be achieved through the Alliance approaches of *place-based solutions, community action, and collaboration*.

Action Group Alliance Steering Committee

Objective	Actions	Performance Measures	Time Frames	Grant/ other Resources	Alliance Resources	Responsibility
4.1 To reduce the pollutants entering Cooks River and Botany Bay by constructing WSUD systems	4.1.1 Prepare and review preliminary surveys and geotechnical investigations of identified sites	Investigations and survey completed	2014-2016		✓	Environmental Engineer & Participation Coordinator
	4.1.2 Prepare functional designs and reports for WSUD at: Scouller St (Marrickville), Madeline St (Strathfield), and Ryan Park (Marrickville)	Completed designs approved and finalised	2014-2016		✓	
	4.1.3 Prepare design specifications, commission consultant and review detailed design and construction drawings for WSUD at: Scouller St (Marrickville), Madeline St (Strathfield), Butler Res (Hurstville), Ryan Park (Marrickville), and Kingsbury Res (Canterbury)	Drawings finalised	2014-2017	✓		
	4.1.4 Develop and implement site-specific community engagement plans	Plans completed	2014-2017	✓		
	4.1.5 Provide assistance to councils for tender specifications, documentation, construction & site inspections, and maintenance & evaluation	Construction completed	2014-2017	✓		
4.2 To increase habitat for migratory, threatened species and support State listed endangered ecological communities at the Landing Lights Cooks River saline wetland	4.2.1 Provide funding and assistance to Rockdale Council to deliver wetland restoration, including mangroves and weed removal	Milestone reporting	2014-2017	✓		Rockdale Council
4.3 To provide technical support to council staff on other WSUD projects	4.3.1 Provide support to council engineers for design and implementation of WSUD on-ground works	Report as required	Ongoing		✓	Environmental Engineer

Program 5: Collaboration & Community Engagement

Purpose This program initiates and expands collaborative actions with government, communities, business, and the education sector. Community education and engagement is informed by local demographics, and framed by catchment issues such as stormwater, weeds and litter. The program aligns with the Alliance focus areas of *sustainable urban water management*, *community action*, and *catchment resilience*, and will be achieved through the Alliance approaches of *place-based solutions*, *education and training*, *collaboration*, *communication*, and *creative resourcing*.

Action Group Ashfield Council, City of Canterbury, and Marrickville Council

Objective	Actions	Performance Measures	Time Frames	Grant/ other Resources	Alliance Resources	Responsibility
5.1 To reduce litter, and increase mulching, weed removal and bush regeneration	5.1.1 Work with NSW Corrective Services' Intensive Corrections Order (ICO) program - providing mulching, weeding and rubbish removal	Number of sites, volunteer hours, bags of rubbish collected, trees planted	2014-2017		✓	Community Engagement and Education Officer
	5.1.2 Assist community and corporate volunteer programs to work in the catchment		2014-2017	✓	✓	
	5.1.3 Deliver place based litter prevention events and activities, including with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities	Number of events and participants Litter reduced	2014-2015	✓	✓	
5.2 To increase and develop understanding of Aboriginal traditional and contemporary associations with Botany Bay waterways	5.2.1 To collaborate with Aboriginal peoples and agencies, including Aboriginal advisory committees	Number of partnerships	2014-2017	✓		Community Engagement and Education Officer & Participation Coordinator
	5.2.2 Run events which provide for communication on Aboriginal understandings of water management	Number of workshops and field days Workshop with Alliance Board	2014-2017	✓		
	5.2.3 Work with Aboriginal organisations to develop guided tours in the catchment at locations relevant to Aboriginal advisory committees	Number tours organised/ supported	2014-2017	✓		
	5.2.4 Promote Dual Naming in the catchment, determined in conjunction with Aboriginal advisory groups	Endorsement of a dual named site by member councils	2017		✓	Project Manager
5.3 To increase educational sector capacity and skills, for a healthier catchment	5.3.1 To increase students' knowledge and actions by promoting Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) and biodiversity friendly on-grounds works in educational properties	Number of workshops	2014-2017		✓	Community Engagement and Education Officer
	5.3.2 Increase capacity of teachers to utilise curriculum resources	Professional development sessions	2014-2017		✓	

Program 5: Collaboration & Community Engagement

Objective	Actions	Performance Measures	Time Frames	Grant/ other Resources	Alliance Resources	Responsibility
5.4 To encourage behaviour change in households by delivering place-based water sensitive homes programs	5.4.1 Develop and deliver locally relevant education & engagement plans for households regarding WSUD sites	Number of plans delivered Number of households engaged	2014-2017	✓		Community Engagement and Education Officer & Participation Coordinator
	5.4.2 Design and commission a catchment education model, and related educational activities	Delivery of model At least one activity delivered in each member council area	2014-2015 2015-2017	✓	✓	
	5.4.3 Design and develop educational resources and activities for CALD communities, including in partnership with Ethnic Communities Council Sustainable Living Project	Workshops delivered in at least three languages Resource produced	2014-2015	✓	✓	
	5.4.4 Deliver education activities, including for CALD communities	Number of activities and participants	2015-2017	✓	✓	
5.5 To forge strong local relationships with relevant organisations to promote Alliance objectives	5.5.1 Work with organisations, including business and industry, on specific catchment issues	Number of events Number of organisations engaged	2014-2017	✓	✓	Community Engagement and Education Officer & Participation Coordinator
	5.5.2 Promote artist in residence programs with a focus on the catchment	Number of programs and participants	2014-2017	✓	✓	
	5.5.3 Develop events with cultural organisations	Number of events and participants	2014-2017	✓	✓	

Program 6: Communications

Purpose This program undertakes communications to encourage actions by communities and stakeholders, for a healthier catchment. The program aligns with the Alliance focus area of *all Alliance focus areas*, and will be achieved through the Alliance approach of *communication*.

Action Group Ashfield Council, City of Sydney, and Strathfield Council

Objective	Actions	Performance Measures	Time Frames	Grant/ other Resources	Alliance Resources	Responsibility
6.1 To set the overarching framework for Alliance communications	6.1.1 Develop Communications Guidelines which cover principles, audiences, branding and procedures	Communications Guidelines developed	2014-2015		✓	Communications Support Officer
	6.1.2 Deliver communications through different mediums including: social media, newsletters, media releases and public relations, hard copy communications and branding such as event posters/brochures, and targeted communications	Report on number of communications delivered for each medium	2014-2017	✓	✓	
6.2 To deliver targeted and tailored communications	6.2.1 Develop and implement specific Communications Plans for: major Alliance projects, key catchment messages, and advocacy actions as they arise	Plans for major Alliance projects, key catchment messages, and advocacy actions	2014-2017		✓	Communications Support Officer, & Relevant member councils

Program 7: Catchment Resilience

Purpose This program assists councils and communities to increase catchment resilience by identifying: effects of changing environmental conditions, and actions to cope with resulting pressures. The changing environment includes human population, pollution, pests and weeds, climate change, and land development. This program aligns with the Alliance focus areas of *sustainable urban water management*, *biodiversity* and *catchment resilience*, and will be achieved through the Alliance approaches of *collaboration*, *creative resourcing*, and *evidence-based decision making*.

Action Group Bankstown City Council, City of Canterbury, and Rockdale City Council

Objective	Actions	Performance Measures	Time Frames	Grant/ other Resources	Alliance Resources	Responsibility
7.1 To promote and encourage a coordinated and integrated approach by major agencies with catchment responsibilities	7.1.1 Convene catchment stakeholder meetings, with State and major agencies. Standing items are: sewage, litter, weed/pests, and jurisdictional issues	Actions implemented, as required	2014-2017		✓	All Alliance staff & Member Councils
	7.1.2 Lobby and advocate for an overarching strategic plan for the Cooks River catchment – with participation from, and actions for, relevant agencies and all councils in the catchment	Report as required	2014-2017		✓	
	7.1.3 Contribute and collaborate with relevant agencies and on Cooks River catchment planning	Milestone reporting	2014-2017		✓	
	7.1.4 Work with Local Land Services on their 'Regional NRM Planning for Climate Change in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Region' project	Report as required	2014-2017		✓	
	7.1.5 Work with members to explore joint activities for catchment resilience such as biodiversity	One members biodiversity group meeting Report as required	2015-2017		✓	
7.2 To assist councils take a consistent approach, and make informed decisions, on flood risks arising from changed environmental factors such as climate change	7.2.1 Provide technical advice and assistance to members' floodplain risk management committees	Report as required	2014-2017		✓	Environmental Engineer

Program 7: Catchment Resilience

Objective	Actions	Performance Measures	Time Frames	Grant/ other Resources	Alliance Resources	Responsibility
7.3 To promote and assist members' collaboration on adaptation solutions to the risks posed by climate change	7.3.1 Review and analyse members' climate change risk assessments and adaptation plans to identify commonalities and collaborative adaptation solutions	Review and report on findings completed	2014-2015		✓	Environmental Engineer
	7.3.2 Convene a workshop to discuss outcomes of review and develop actions strategy	Workshop convened Actions strategy developed	2014-2015 2015-2016		✓	



Contact

cooksriver.org.au

02 9748 9644

info@cooksriver.org.au